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ABSTRACT

These two newsletter issues recount activities of Voices for Illinois Children to ensure that basic needs of children, families, and communities are met. The summer issue notes various bills in progress in the Illinois House, and looks at the lack of health insurance affecting more than 300,000 Illinois children. Child advocacy efforts are also detailed, including the 10-year anniversary of Voices for Illinois Children. The winter issue details a "Start Early" campaign to apprise parents with limited resources of the importance of nurturing their children's early development, and a meeting of community members, business leaders, and state policy makers to improve the conditions of Illinois families. The role of community leadership in improving the well-being of children and families is also discussed. Regular feature sections of the newsletter include "Business Cares for Kids Profile" and "Network News" on organizations across the state advocating for children. (HTH)

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VOICES FOR ILLINOIS CHILDREN
VOICES

Inside Voices

- Ensuring Access to Health Care
- New Era of Welfare Reform
- Business Cares for Kids
- Network News & More!

Volume 9 Number 1 Spring 1997

Progress Made in Springfield

In a legislative session that grappled with major reforms in how Illinois funds schools and deals with families receiving welfare benefits, state lawmakers also acted upon proposals outlined in the "Start Early" legislative package–three bills aimed at helping children and families in their early years.

"We've made progress on several issues, but we've got a long way to go on others," says Voices President Jerome Stermer.

"Working with nearly 80 other organizations, we've won some important victories with our Start Early efforts," Stermer adds. "The Governor and state legislators from both parties focused attention on the need to provide community support to very young children and their parents. Before the session adjourned, Illinois General Assembly members voted to help 2,000 more at-risk children participate in early learning programs, 4,000 more children enroll in preschool programs and about 20,000 more parents join parent education programs. These are the sort of 'early' efforts that strengthen families and help prepare children for success in school."

The "Start Early" victories will lead to important expansions in early childhood programs.

Here is a recap of "Start Early" activities -- House Bills 1301, 1302 and 1303 -- as well as other major highlights from the past session:

House Bill 1301 Improve early education

Voices and other supporters began this effort seeking two basic improvements: increased funding for proven-successful programs operated by the Illinois State Board of Education; and new grants to inspire community leaders to work together to design innovative efforts such as full-day, full-year early education programs.

H.B. 1301 passed the House with wide, bipartisan support and was assigned to the Senate Education Committee, where it was attacked by the far right.

"But thanks to the hard work of many parents, early childhood providers and dedicated child advocates across the state who talked with their legislators, the efforts to improve early education did not die in committee like our opponents predicted," says Harriet Meyer, director of the Ounce of Prevention Fund.

In the end, the Illinois General Assembly:

- approved an $11.2 million increase in pre-Kindergarten funding, which was 10 percent above this year's funding level;
- added $2 million -- a 50 percent increase over last year -- to the Early Childhood Parental Training Program, which encourages the healthy development of children younger than five years old; and
- more than doubled the funding for the Prevention Initiative from $2 million to $4.3 million. The Prevention Initiative helps children aged birth to three and their parents by providing health, social and child development services.

House Bill 1302 Ensure access to health care

This legislation sought to help working poor parents by offering low-cost, outpatient health insurance coverage for their uninsured children. Such a state-supported program -- which would have been available to children in families with incomes less than 250 percent of the poverty line -- would have asked families to pay a portion of the premium based upon their income.

"The attention brought to the bill in the General Assembly was a result of the efforts of a broad range of child advocacy groups in Illinois," said Dr. Mark Rosenberg, with the Illinois Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. The Illinois State Medical Society also strongly supported this legislation.

Unfortunately, the bill passed the House but was not called for a vote in the Illinois Senate. However, state senators on both sides of the aisle committed their support to the bill in a signed letter to Senate leaders and recommended that the measure be brought back in the fall veto session.

(See PROGRESS on page 5)

Voices Launches "Start Early" Campaign

Building on recent successes in the public policy arena, Voices for Illinois Children has begun "Start Early: Learning Begins at Birth" -- a three-part, multi-year campaign to raise public awareness about the value of nurturing a baby's earliest learning.

"About 500 babies are born every day in Illinois. Some enter a world of opportunities. Others face enormous challenges," notes Voices President Jerome Stermer. "Through the 'Start Early' campaign, Voices will educate the public about the importance of helping all children -- and, especially, children at-risk -- receive the very best start in life."

(See START EARLY on page 7)

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Scoring Victories, Looking Ahead

A Column from Voices' President Jerome Stermer

After winning yet another tournament this summer at Cog Hill in Lemont, Illinois, the amazing Tiger Woods reflected: "I never look back. Championships are always ahead."

Tiger Woods is the quintessential example of "Start Early." His admonition to keep one's focus toward the future can serve as a guiding framework for Illinois child advocates this year. Working together, advocates from all across the state recently achieved some real policy victories for our children. Governor Edgar adopted an early childhood theme for his annual budget message. State lawmakers gave a positive response to both the "Start Early" agenda and the proposal to rewrite our state's approach to subsidized child care. With the momentum from those admittedly partial but important victories behind us, now is the perfect time for all of us who care about children to push forward.

"Now is the perfect time for all of us who care about children to push forward."

Now is an excellent time to put together a "Start Early" committee in your community to design local early childhood agendas. Now is the time for local school boards to collaborate with family support groups and early childhood programs to provide help to parents of young children. Now is the time for business leaders, civic groups and people of faith to launch or enhance early childhood initiatives. And now is the time for state policy makers to take advantage of the new national attention on the earliest years and bring new priority to early childhood strategies in both education and human services budgets and programs.

This edition of our Voices newsletter includes descriptions of the complex and confusing policy environment that has developed for issues affecting children in Illinois. Despite that complexity, child advocates are making real progress in promoting a responsible early childhood agenda. Thanks to the aggressive involvement of literally hundreds of child advocates, 2,000 more at-risk children will benefit from early intervention programs next year, 20,000 more parents will be able to attend parenting classes and 46,000 children will be able to enroll in state-funded pre-school programs -- up more than 4,000 from last year.

A new awareness about the importance of the earliest days, weeks and months in every child's life has started to pay off in Illinois. The wonderful collaboration between neuroscientists and early childhood specialists has provided us with terrific new data about brain development. This new data is enabling us to make the case for targeting resources toward new families and very young children. The data is helping to persuade the public that the best way to respond to children who might be abused or neglected is to work to prevent those tragedies from ever occurring in the first place.

Let's build on the momentum. Let's set our sights, like Tiger, on the championship tournaments ahead. Let's make sure that by the time the year 2000 rolls around our Illinois communities will have the needed resources to enable every child to have the best possible early start in life.

4

Jerry Stermer

310,000 Illinois Kids Lack Health Insurance

Katlyn's throat infection reappeared today. Her temperature continues to rise. She cries and can't eat because of the pain, but Katlyn's parents have the burden of deciding if they have money this month to take their 4-year-old daughter to the doctor.

Katlyn

Katlyn is one of 310,000 children in Illinois who have no health insurance, but her story represents many of the fears and struggles too many Illinois families must face.

Her story appears in *Falling Through the Gap: Uninsured Children in Illinois*, a first-ever statistical profile of children without health insurance, which Voices recently published. The report reveals that nearly 310,000 Illinois children are uninsured -- a figure that ranks Illinois with the highest number of uninsured children among our Midwestern neighbors.

The report also breaks common stereotypes about the make-up of uninsured children, showing that: two-thirds of uninsured children live in working-poor families, 55 percent live in suburban or rural areas, 59 percent live in two-parent families, and 40 percent are white.

Voices and other advocates will revisit efforts to ensure that all kids have access to health care in the fall legislative session.

"The report is a wake-up call for Illinois," says Voices Project Director Ami Nagle. "Before we released the report, 46 other states had taken steps to insure uninsured children. Since then, the Republican governor in Arkansas has led the way to add his state to the roster of states that recognize the importance of ensuring access to health care. That leaves Illinois among the last three states to take action."

House Bill 1302 -- part of the "Start Early" legislative package considered by the Illinois General Assembly this past spring -- passed the Illinois House of Representatives, but was not called for a vote in the Illinois Senate. The measure would have offered low-cost, outpatient health insurance coverage for uninsured children who live in families with incomes less than 250 percent of the poverty line. The measure would have asked families to pay a portion of the premium based upon their income.

"We're exploring a number of options to revisit H.B. 1302 in the fall veto session," Nagle explains.

In the meantime, more children and their families will continue to grapple with the problems of uninsurance.

Katlyn's father is a chef in Decatur who earns about $10 an hour. Katlyn's mother works part-time so she can devote more time to caring for Katlyn, who has Angelman's Syndrome, a chromosome deletion that affects muscle usage and speech, and causes impaired vision and severe to profound mental retardation. The family's combined income makes it hard to provide for health care as well as other necessities.

"It costs $42 per doctor visit," says Katlyn's mother, Terri. "Amoxicillin doesn't help, so we go to stronger medication, which costs $60. So, we're talking about over $100 per visit and Katlyn went to the doctor three times last November."

"Katlyn needs her tonsils taken out, but we can't afford it," Terri adds. "She would probably be in the hospital for a few days and that would be a financial burden on us. But the surgery would probably cut down on the infections."

According to *Falling Through the Gap*, most children with health insurance are covered under a parent's employer-sponsored health insurance plan. But only 33 percent of workers with employer-covered plans carry dependent coverage, which is too often unaffordable or not even offered to service-sector and part-time employees. What's worse, the percentage will probably drop even lower as more people move from welfare to work.

"Not having health insurance is a serious problem," Nagle says. "Our report reveals that children without health insurance are less likely to be fully immunized and twice as likely to be hospitalized for immunizable diseases. Uninsured children are one-and-a-half times as likely to be hospitalized for something as common as asthma. These children can't wait any longer for a solution."

TO RECEIVE A FREE COPY OF *FALLING THROUGH THE GAP*, CALL ANDREA STRICKLAND AT VOICES OR DOWNLOAD THE REPORT FROM VOICES' HOME PAGE AT WWW.VOICES4KIDS.ORG.

Advocacy Update: Working on Behalf of Kids

Voices for Illinois Children works on a variety of advocacy causes. Our "Start Early" activities are recapped on page 1. Here are briefings on a few other efforts.

Welfare reform: A new era begins

Welfare reform is officially underway in Illinois, but many challenges remain to making certain that reform efforts are successful, notes Voices Project Director Ami Nagle.

"Illinois has some tough choices to make in the months and years ahead. Everyone has a role to play in making sure that poor children and their families aren't adversely affected by our actions," Nagle said at a recent symposium co-sponsored by Voices, and the Irving B. Harris Graduate School of Public Policy and the School for Social Service Administration at the University of Chicago.

About 34,000 people now combine welfare and work through the state's Work Pays program. Illinois must increase its work participation caseload to 101,000 by 2002 to meet federal requirements.

Meeting that goal during the next five years will increase the need for affordable, accessible, quality child care while putting strains on the job market. Of the welfare-to-work participants who found employment in 1995, 81 percent earned $6 or less per hour. What's more, despite a booming economy, entry-level job seekers continue to outnumber entry-level jobs by a four-to-one ratio. The ratio is higher in some places: nine-to-one in East St. Louis and six-to-one in Chicago.

SSI: Giving families a fighting chance

About 16,000 Illinois children with physical or mental disabilities could lose their financial assistance because of the new federal welfare reform act–but families have a new ally in appealing their cases.

Supplemental Security Income (SSI) provides cash assistance to 48,000 disabled children and their families in Illinois. Under the welfare reform act, SSI recipients will be reassessed under more stringent definitions of disabilities. Most families receiving SSI cannot afford legal representation, but they have a right to a fair hearing before their funds are suspended.

The Illinois State Bar Association recently announced a new campaign to attract 3,000 lawyers who will work pro bono to handle children's appeals to the Social Security Administration. ISBA President Todd Smith said he hopes that each volunteer will handle two pro bono cases.

Families, lawyers, paralegals, law students and others who are interested in helping or learning more can call the Illinois Pro Bono Center at 1-800-471-9300.

Education funding: The struggle continues

The cynics have a valid claim when they say there's been a lot of talk but little action when it comes to education reform, but Voices isn't about to give up the fight.

"We must ensure that all Illinois children receive a high quality education, no matter where they live," notes Voices President Jerome Stermer. "Our state desperately needs education funding reform -- and that reform must embrace consideration of the first few critical years in every child's life that prepare the child for success in school."

In fiscal year 1996, only one-tenth of one percent of the Illinois State Board of Education budget went to services helping children from birth to age three. Less than 3 percent went to programs for children aged 3 to 5 years.

"Increasingly, children are spending longer hours outside of their homes during their earliest years," Stermer says. "With the increasing number of parents in the work force and the pressure to move more families from welfare to work, we can expect that even more children will be in the care of others for a significant portion of the day. Some will benefit from a loving, stable and stimulating environment. Others won't have the same opportunity. The vast majority will enter our public schools -- both those who've been well-prepared and those who have not."

Speaking at a Springfield rally earlier this year, Stermer called for education reforms that would be fair for students, schools and taxpayers -- and would support "starting early" in every child's life. The rally was sponsored by the Chicago Urban League, the Illinois PTA and others.

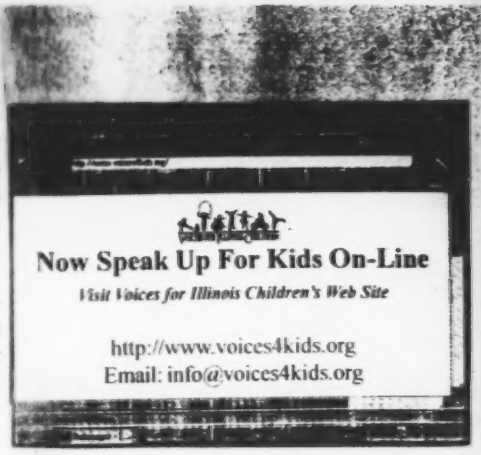
Voices' web page notes volunteer opportunities

Illinois Issues names Voices' home page as Web Site of the Month in the magazine's July/August 1997 issue.

The magazine notes that the site -- http://www.voices4kids.org -- lists hundreds of volunteer opportunities, from tutoring young people to being a zoo guide to answering a hotline for runaways. "The comprehensive listing of organizations and issues concerning children -- child abuse and neglect, child support, substance abuse counseling, shelter, recreation and the arts, schools, health care, to name a few -- includes organizations statewide," writes Donald Sevener.

The site also provides county-by-county statistics on child well-being and complete copies of several Voices reports.

The volunteer listings builds on Voices' recent participation in the President's Summit on Volunteerism. Nancy Stevenson attended the summit on behalf of Voices.


Now Speak Up For Kids On-Line
Visit Voices for Illinois Children's Web Site
http://www.voices4kids.org
Email: info@voices4kids.org

October and child health

October will be celebrated as Child Health Month, a time to pay special attention to raising awareness about child health issues.

In Chicago, the local Child Health Month partnership is working with the Chicago Park District to conduct the first-ever "Be Safe, Be Healthy" Art Contest. Prizes include a scholarship to a summer arts program, tickets to a Chicago Bulls game, and gift certificates to a favorite toy store. The winners will be announced Oct. 4 at a Child Health Month festival at Lake Shore Park. For more information about Chicago activities, contact Julia Harmon, of Children and Youth 2000, at (312) 922-2000.

In addition, the Children's Defense Fund (CDF) -- collaborating with a wide range of denominations and religious organizations -- is coordinating the 6th annual National Observance of Children's Sabbaths on Oct. 17, 18 and 19. This year's observance, "Seeking Shalom: Healthy Children, Healthy Nation," explores the role that congregations, communities, states and the nation must play in assuring that children and their families are healthy. For more information, contact Nancy Stevenson at Voices.

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House Bill 1303 Expand Healthy Families Illinois

This bill sought to expand state resources for community-based, voluntary home visiting programs for at-risk parents – cost-effective efforts that promote healthy child development, help families move toward self-sufficiency, and prevent child abuse and neglect.

This effort scored an early victory when Gov. Jim Edgar's proposal created a $1 million Healthy Families Illinois line item in the new Department of Human Services budget. While pleased with this first step, child advocates recognized that the program desperately needed additional funding.

Once again, the bill passed the House but was not permitted consideration by the full Senate.

"Thanks again to a loud outcry from community leaders, parents, advocates, and health care providers across the state, the effort to expand Healthy Families did not die in the rules committee," Voices Senior Projects Director Gaylord Gieseke explained. "The legislature appropriated $2 million for voluntary home visiting programs, doubling the Governor's original proposal."

House Bill 630 Expand access to child care

This important legislation met similar obstacles as other bills in the Illinois Senate, but ultimately passed as part of the state's welfare reform legislation.

State lawmakers appropriated $100 million in additional funds for child care assistance, moving Illinois into the upper ranks with Wisconsin and Rhode Island in terms of state expansions for child care. Now, for the first time, low income families in Illinois will not have to fit into one category or another to be eligible for a child care subsidy. The entire child care system will be based on family size and income, with all families up to 50 percent of the state median income able to access the subsidy.

"This is a significant victory for children and families," Stermer notes. "This will help families who are trying to play by the rules make the move from welfare to work. Thanks to the Day Care Action Council, who led the battle, we've made accomplishments that will help children and their families in the months and years to come."

Welfare reform

On July 1, the program that provides cash assistance for 475,000 children in 235,000 poor Illinois families was changed from AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children) to TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families). More than the name has changed.

The new program requires all participants to work within two years from the time they begin receiving benefits and creates a lifetime limit of five years for the receipt of assistance. The cornerstone of welfare reform in Illinois is a program called Work Pays, which allows TANF recipients to keep more of their cash assistance while they move off of welfare. Under the Work Pays program, for every $3 of income earned, a recipient's TANF grant is reduced by $1.

"Work Pays is a successful program, but we've got to remember that moving people from welfare to work is not going to be without many difficulties," Stermer says. "Illinois has the fourth largest welfare population in the United States -- and, in our state, about half of the parents receiving assistance have not finished high school, and for every entry-level job there are four recipients and low-skilled, unemployed people looking for work. Illinois will have to do more to create jobs and prepare low-skilled workers if we expect these efforts to be truly successful."

What's more, despite the victory in expanding child care assistance -- a crucial element in moving mothers into the workforce -- the availability of child care will still be a problem for many families. About 68 percent of the women leaving welfare find jobs working evenings, part-time or weekends, according to an Illinois Department of Public Aid study. But only 10 percent of child care programs in Illinois offer evening hours and only 5 percent offer weekend services. The quality of child care also will continue to be a concern, particularly as greater demands are placed upon existing resources.

Voices has worked throughout the past year – involving thousands of residents in town meetings with state officials, co-convening a recent welfare reform symposium for community leaders, and meeting with dozens of public policy makers throughout the state – to shape the state's approach, implementation and monitoring of welfare reform.

"Business leaders, child advocates, public officials and community leaders all share the responsibility of making sure that welfare reform doesn't bring additional harm to poor children and their families," Stermer says. "We've got our work cut out for us."

Education funding

According to the Governor's Commission on Education Funding, a "foundation level" of $4,225 per student is the minimum amount necessary to ensure a quality education. Unfortunately, more than 60 percent of the state's school districts -- nearly two of every three -- does not have enough funds to meet this adequacy level. Moreover, since 1976, the state's share of funding for public schools has decreased from 47 percent to 32 percent -- forcing a greater reliance on property taxes to finance education.

Lawmakers spent the spring 1997 legislative session debating the merits of various education reform plans; ultimately, no major changes were enacted.

"Voices and others argued that all children should have the opportunity to receive a high quality education, no matter where they live," Stermer says. "We continue to believe that any reform must be equitable -- fair for all students, fair for all schools. Any reform must generate enough funding to adequately support schools and must provide relief for property-tax payers. Finally, and perhaps most fundamentally, we believe that any changes should include consideration of a child's earliest years -- the first few critical years that prepare children for success in school. We will continue to stand by these principles."

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THESE ISSUES, CALL VOICES AT (312) 456-0600 OR VISIT THE VOICES WEB SITE AT WWW.VOICES4KIDS.ORG.

It Starts with "Ten Things"

The borrowing library at Voices has a few copies left of the 11-minute video summarizing "Ten Things Every Child Needs", a WTTW/Channel 11 documentary supported by the Robert R. McCormick Tribune Foundation. The summary describes how every child's learning potential and development can be especially influenced during the earliest weeks and months of life.

"Ten Things"
notes that every child needs:

- ✔ **Interaction**
- ✔ **Loving Touch**
- ✔ **Stable Relationship**
- ✔ **Safe, Healthy Environment**
- ✔ **Self-Esteem**
- ✔ **Quality Child Care**
- ✔ **Communication**
- ✔ **Play**
- ✔ **Music**
- ✔ **Reading**

"Ten Things" are helping baby Steve get on the right track to a happy Future.

TO BORROW A COPY AND RECEIVE A FREE BROCHURE, CALL ANDREA STRICKLAND AT VOICES OF VISIT OUR WEB SITE AT WWW.VOICES4KIDS.ORG.

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Voices Celebrates 10 Years of Dedication to Child Advocacy

Voices recently celebrated 10 years of child advocacy work at the 1997 Kids Count Awards Dinner, honoring a few individuals, organizations and corporations for their efforts to provide a better future for all Illinois children.

This year's dinner was chaired by William Osborn, CEO of The Northern Trust Company. Osborn was joined by forty-three corporate vice chairs and other business and community leaders in support of this years' event.

William Osborn

Motorola, Inc. was honored for its efforts to increase awareness of an adult's role in the development of a child. The company has published and distributed two booklets to their employees –*The Role of the Adult in the Life of a Child* and *Crisis in American Education*, which offers strategies to improve the current educational system. Motorola also offers parenting workshops and seminars to its employees and their families throughout the year. Carl Koenemann, executive vice president and chief financial officer, accepted the award for Motorola.

Kids Count Award recipients also included El Valor, a multicultural organization that has provided 1,200 families throughout Chicago with prevention, early intervention programs, and Head Start programs. Vincent Allocco, executive director of El Valor, accepted the award.

"Voices was pleased to learn that years ago El Valor recognized the positive affects of early intervention and interaction. Only recently has new data proven that what a baby sees, hears, and feels in the first days, weeks and years of life is key to a brighter future for the baby. We applaud their accomplishments," said Voices President Jerome Stermer.

Carpentersville's Community Unit School District #300 was honored for their efforts to make changes for the children in their district. The Dorothy deLacey Family Education Center combines education with social services and family involvement to focus on the needs of the child. This formula results in a comprehensive program that promotes educational achievement. Several members of their board were in attendance including Mary Henk, their board president, who accepted the award.

Judith S. Block, board president of the Child Welfare League of America, the nation's largest organization of child welfare agencies, also received a 1997 Kids Count Award. "For several years, Judy has promoted the need to make sure that children are safe and well nurtured. She is a true voice for children," Stermer said.

The Kids Count Awards were presented on behalf of Voices this year by four participants of Future Leaders Chicago, a program supported by the Chicago Community Trust which builds leadership skills among Chicago-area high school juniors. The four participants included: Natasha Lindor, of Chicago, who attends St. Scholastica Academy; Nicole Frantilla, of Broadview, who attends Trinity High School; Karega Bennett, of Chicago, who attends the University of Chicago Laboratory School; and Natalie Vanderspiegel, of Richton Park, who attends Rich South High School.

The annual dinner and silent auction, held at the Renaissance Chicago Hotel, raised about $150,000. An active event committee, co-chaired by Nancie Freeborn and Anita Blanchard Nesbitt, orchestrated the exciting evening. Guests participated in the silent auction that attracted an array of interests from Bulls fans to "ER" followers with an autographed script. But the entertainment for the evening caught everyone's eye. The internationally known Jesse White Tumblers performed a high-flying routine for all to see. WBBM-TV/ Channel 2's Linda MacLennan emceed the dinner.

Award recipients Carl Koenemann (for Motorola), Mary Henk (for Carpentersville Community Unit School District) and Vincent Allocco (for El Valor).
Award recipient Judith S. Block's remarks appear on page 7.

The Jesse White Tumblers entertained the crowd at the Kids Count dinner.

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Your Voice: To Build A Child

By Judith S. Block

Judith S. Block is the national president of the Child Welfare League of America, the nation's largest organization of child welfare agencies. She also serves on the Executive Committee of the Chicago Community Trust and as a Court Appointed Special Advocate, a volunteer post that serves as the child's voice during judicial proceedings. Voices for Illinois Children recently honored her with a 1997 Kids Count Award. Here is an excerpt from her acceptance remarks.

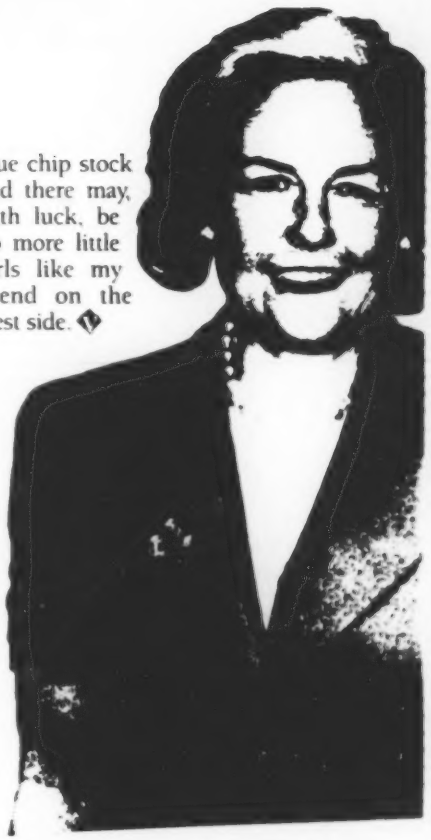
I was visiting a little friend of mine. I see her every month or so. She is four-years-old, was born with PCP in her system and abused before she was two. She has five brothers and sisters and they all live in different homes. We were playing a game and she bubbled and laughed and delighted in beating me. I marveled at her quickness, her intelligence, her resilience and it was clear that she did not know that within a week she would leave this loving foster home for another where she could hopefully live with one sibling. Thus, she would leave this "mom" for her fifth "mom" in four years.

This child is one of the 50,000 like her in our state.

Why is she not in her own home with a mom and a dad, and a dog and ballet lessons and all the other things we take for granted? The story is too long and complicated to tell but the end is that we cannot afford to keep passing judgment on the indiscretions and failures of adults and older teens in our society. Their children are among us and they are costing us millions, not only in dollars, but in lost opportunities and broken dreams and we, as a civilized society, must address their needs.

We know that prevention, early childhood programs, family support and child care are key to a child's future, yet we are more willing to be taxed to build prisons than we are to provide child care.

Remember, it costs far more to repair an adult than to build a child. Whatever we give or don't give will come back to us in one form or another. If we are willing to venture forth and invest enough early on, we will find ourselves holding a blue chip stock and there may, with luck, be no more little girls like my friend on the west side.



START EARLY
(continued from front page)

Voices is working with a variety of local, state and national partners on the "Start Early" campaign, which includes efforts to reach three audiences:

Public Policy Makers. Voices is continuing to inform lawmakers and other state officials about a variety of successful strategies designed to ensure early support for children and their families.

Community Leaders. Voices is encouraging community leaders to collaborate in more effective ways to improve local early childhood and family support efforts.

Parents. Voices will work through local partners to provide new parents with creative and informative materials that highlight the early learning potential of their own children -- and encourage the parents and others to become child advocates themselves.

"With a state as big as Illinois, we'll have to target our 'Start Early' efforts to make the best use of our resources," Stermer explains. Voices will focus 'Start Early' work in ten communities: Champaign-Urbana, Chicago, DuPage County, East St. Louis, Quincy, Rockford, South Chicago Suburbs, Southern Seven Counties, Springfield and Waukegan/Lake County.

"The campaign will build on the momentum created by our recent successes with the 'Start Early' legislative package in the Illinois General Assembly," Stermer adds. The 'Start Early' legislative package included measures to improve early education and child care, provide health coverage for uninsured children and expand voluntary home visiting services to strengthen families. During the spring legislative session, Illinois lawmakers broadened support for voluntary home visits, early education and child care. Efforts to ensure health coverage for children passed the Illinois House, but were not called for a vote in the Illinois Senate.

New research confirms that a child's earliest days, weeks, months and years lay the foundation for future success in school and throughout life. These early years are a time when the baby's brain is being "wired" with trillions of connections among billions of neurons and important human connections are being forged between the baby and the adults in the baby's life.

"We are living in a revolutionary time in terms of our understanding of a child's first five years," Stermer says. "And it's a momentous time in terms of how parents, community leaders and public policy makers must respond, as well."

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT "START EARLY: LEARNING BEGINS AT BIRTH," CONTACT VOICES OR VISIT THE VOICES HOME PAGE AT WWW.VOICES4KIDS.ORG.

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Network News: Advocates Raise their Voice for Kids

Meet others across the state who are speaking out for kids. These are just a few of Voices' members, volunteers and friends who are making a difference for young people in their communities and across the state.

BLOOMINGTON

Nancy Ronquillo, executive director of the Children's Foundation and a Voices board member, is excited about the strides the Children's Foundation has made together with Baby Fold. In January, the two organizations combined forces to launch a Healthy Families home visiting pilot program. To date, the program has served more than 20 families. Ronquillo is also enthusiastic about the start-up of the Crisis Nursery, one of only four 24-hour emergency child abuse prevention programs in the state. The six-month-old program already has served nearly 100 children.

CARBONDALE

Southern Illinois University's School of Medicine is starting a new program that exposes ninth grade students to various medical careers and gives them hands-on experience in medical techniques. Starting in June, 20 to 25 ninth-grade students from East St. Louis will enroll in the MedPrep program at SIU and stay in the University's dorms, reports Voices friend **Harold Bardeau.**

CARBONDALE/MARION

The John A. Logan Childcare Resource and Referral continues to promote positive atmospheres for families and recently participated in the annual Children's Day picnic. There was free food and a variety of activities for family fun. About 3,500 families participated in the event, notes Voices friend **Terry White.**

CARTERVILLE

Bonnie Wheeler, a member of the Voices Board of Directors, has been elected as chair of Parents Anonymous. Bonnie has been an active member of Voices' board for several years.

CHAMPAIGN-URBANA

Best Interests of Children (BIOC) is focusing on community change by improving the lives of children and families. BIOC, led by **Linda Abernathy,** recently held several training sessions that incorporate the curriculum of The Pacific Institute, an internationally recognized management consulting firm that teaches how to be successful by changing attitudes, beliefs, and habits through practical application of social learning theory and cognitive psychology. Voices Project Coordinator **Susan Frankel Perlin** provided the keynote address.

CHICAGO

Congrats to five Chicago area teachers who were recognized for their dedication to nurturing the early learning of our youth: **Cathy Maria Foote,** Chicago; **Marilyn Lindeman,** Park Ridge; **Katherine McLellan,** Evanston; **Leah Radinsky,** Chicago; and **Bonnie Rodin-Kling,** Evanston. These are the recipients of the 1997 Kohl/McCormick Early Childhood Teaching Awards. From August 1 to December 1, 1997, you can call 312/ 335-KIDS to nominate an early childhood teacher for the 1998 Awards.

Carmen Velasquez is one of 10 people selected nationwide to receive a $100,000 award from the Robert Wood Johnson Community Health Leadership Program. Velasquez, of Alivio Medicial Center, was honored for creating a medical facility in the Pilsen neighborhood that caters to the cultural and health care needs of the community.

Sidney Golberg is working to expose foster children to the world of fine arts. "Pathways to Development" offers programs to children between 8 years and 12 years old, which include dance, theater, music, visual arts and video production. The program is managed by the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, with classes taught by some of Chicago's professional artists, musicians and actors. Golberg, a former caseworker, coordinates the program.

Long-time child advocate and a Voices' volunteer, **Joyce Washington,** was sworn-in May fifth as a Thornton Township Trustee. Washington, who was a Dolton Library Trustee for two years, will hold her new position for four years.

Friends of Voices for Illinois Children extend their congratulations on the birth of **Penelope Joan Belnap,** one of the thousands of Illinois babies who rely on adults to provide her with a great start in life. Her mother, **Paula Belnap,** is a dedicated Voices member and friend.

EAST ST. LOUIS

Stanford Scott, coordinator for Safe and Drug-Free Schools in District 189, received funds from the Enterprise Community to establish Safe Haven Programs at local elementary schools. Safe Haven is an after-school program that offers tutoring, conflict resolution and recreational development for the schools' enrolled students. District teachers and other local professionals facilitate the program. School District 189 has six Safe Haven locations and is working hard to create Safe Haven locations at the remaining 13 elementary schools in East St. Louis.

EFFINGHAM

Sister Julia Huiskamp, a former Voices board member, was keynote speaker March 9 at the Catholic Charities Benefit Dinner. She spoke of the need to serve as a voice for kids to help pave the way to a brighter future.

EVANSTON

The Evanston Neighborhood Conference sponsored a forum in March on Child Care Services for the community. The

Evanston Neighborhood Conference, along with several child care agencies, held the forum to raise public awareness about the need for more child care services. **Susan Doctors,** vice-president of Medicus Systems Corporation, was a panelist at the forum. Doctors suggested businesses need to be more involved in child care services and should view providing child care as a way to recruit and retain employees.

FREEPORT

Building on recent successes in local collaboration and work done at the 1996 Campaign for Illinois Communities Symposium, local alderwoman and Voices member **Pat Leitzen Fye,** representatives from United Way, government offices, businesses and human service agencies have joined together to form the Freeport Area Human Services Council. Their mission is to ensure that all families and individuals have easy access to essential services that are high quality, well-coordinated and affordable.

MOLINE

Bank One, Quad Cities President **Thomas H. Robinson** has recently joined the Board of Directors for Voices for Illinois Children. Robinson is an active advocate for children in his community. He is chairman of the Quad City Development Group, president of Renew Moline and director of Junior Achievement of the Quad City Area.

QUNICY

The Family Service Agency of Adams County kicked-off a collaborative effort in March that aims to increase the number of foster care homes in Adams County. **Mark Schmitz,** director of the Family Service Agency, says their goal is to keep Adams County foster children in Adams County by opening 27 foster care homes in 1997. The citizens panel includes Quincy Mayor **Chuck Scholz** and several local businessmen. Chaddock, a foster care facility in Adams County, and DCFS are the other agencies involved in this collaborative effort.

The Quincy/Adams County Campaign for Children recently published the Adams County Profile on Children and Youth, notes Voices' Board member **Jeanette Bitter.** The profile evaluates physical, emotional, educational, and economic conditions of children to help direct community efforts and resources where they're needed most.

VOICES FOR ILLINOIS CHILDREN

The National Association of Child Advocates recently presented the 1997 Child Advocates Awards to five dedicated child advocacy organizations and individuals. **Gaylord Gieseke,** Voices' Senior Projects Director, is the recipient of the Professional Advocate Award. Gieseke has, among many things, demonstrated leadership in community capacity building efforts and the development of the Healthy Families voluntary home visiting program throughout Illinois.

When the Illinois Association for Marriage and Family Therapy held their annual conference in April, Voices was selected to receive the Dedicated Service to Families Award. Voices' President **Jerry Stermer** was on hand to accept the award, which focuses on Voices' collaborative child advocacy efforts.

The Publicity Club of Chicago held its 38th Annual Golden Trumpet Awards in May, during which participants received Silver, Golden or Platinum Trumpet Awards for their creative and informative communications work. **Deborah Popely & Company** and **Voices for Illinois Children** were awarded the Silver Trumpet for creating the *Learning To Fly* video. The video describes the importance of improving quality early education and child care.

In its 10th Annual "100 Women Making a Difference," *Today's Chicago Women* recognizes Voices' **Nancy Stevenson** for her dedication to child advocacy.

Two Special Friends

Voices for Illinois Children has lost two special friends.

Jerry Gordon served on the Voices Program Committee and the Kids Count Advisory Committee. He worked in the Public Guardian's Office in Chicago, was a noted photographer and was particularly concerned about children whose lives were shattered by the tragic experiences of abuse, neglect or delinquency. The Voices Board of Directors has established the Jerry Gordon Kids Count Fellowship in his memory. Andrea Havill, a student at the University of Chicago School of Social Service Administration, has been named as the first Jerry Gordon Kids Count Fellow.

Phyllis Gustafson worked as a personal assistant for two generations of the Adlai Stevenson family, in Springfield and in Washington, D.C. Her estate left a generous gift to support Voices' ongoing work on behalf of children.

IF YOU KNOW A PERSON OR A GROUP THAT YOU THINK SHOULD BE RECOGNIZED FOR GREAT ADVOCACY EFFORTS, CALL MARJORIE NEWMAN AT (312) 456-0600/EXT. 564;

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Business Cares for Kids

A New Corporate Partnership Program

A growing number of American corporations are realizing that securing the future of our nation's economy requires securing the future of our children. Today s children are tomorrow's work force. Investing in them produces a substantial future return in the form of a healthier, better educated, more responsible, skilled labor pool that will better position companies to compete in the national and global economy.

Here in Illinois, corporate leadership is already at work for children. Voices for Illinois Children has enjoyed support from and worked in partnership with dozens of local corporations over the past ten years. In an effort to increase the number of corporations engaged in promoting and providing funding for child advocacy, Voices will soon unveil its Business Cares For Kids Corporate Partnership Program.

With plans for its debut in late September, Business Cares For Kids will present a variety of opportunities for businesses to learn from one another about ways corporate leadership can help solve the problems facing Illinois children.

Beginning with this issue, the Voices newsletter will contain a Business Cares For Kids feature. This column will suggest ways businesses can take action on behalf of children. We'll also offer ideas for business leaders who may want to explore new models of workplace involvement on behalf of Illinois children. The emphasis will be on simple things that companies can do to help children.

We'll also profile local corporations that are making a difference for children in our state. In this issue you'll read how Motorola, Inc. has taken a leadership role in educating their employees about parenting with specific strategies to improve children's education.

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT BUSINESS CARES FOR KIDS, CONTACT VOICES DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT, JIM PERRY AT: (312) 456-0600/EXT. 551.

Business Cares for Kids Profile:

MOTOROLA

Begin a voyage of discovery for yourself and be sure to take some children along with you.

—From Motorola's booklet,
The Role of the Adult in the Life of a Child

Motorola, Inc., probably best known for car radios and cellular phones, is the world's leading provider of wireless communications, semiconductors and advanced electronic systems, components and services. Motorola maintains sales, service and manufacturing facilities throughout the world, and conducts business on six continents while employing more than 139,000 people worldwide. What many may not know about Motorola is that the company is highly committed to parenting and child advocacy.

In 1991, Motorola's *Crisis in American Education* booklet was distributed to all of its employees in the United States. The booklet outlined a variety of strategies for changing the current education system to better reflect the needs of children and the country. Recognizing that even a new and improved school system alone cannot fully prepare the children of America for the challenges ahead, Motorola championed the idea that all adults have a role in preparing children for the challenges of the future.

Motorola's worldwide Parenting & Child Advocacy Initiative was introduced in 1995 as part of its effort to improve the learning and teaching of children of their employees. The company points out that parents and other concerned adults have a critically important role in educating children. When you work and play with children, you are shaping their impression of society and how the world responds and relates to them, according to Gary Tooker, chairman of Motorola, Inc. Whether you are a grandparent, uncle, aunt, educator, neighbor, caregiver or acquaintance, you are teaching them something about themselves. Your involvement and contribution are critical to the future of our children.

Parenting champions have been identified at all Motorola facilities, and every location can take advantage of a series of sessions dealing with child development, cognitive development, families, schools and partnering with children.

Motorola's booklet *The Role of the Adult in the Life of a Child* reminds us that all of this information is really about one thing -- being an advocate for children.

VOICES EXTENDS A SPECIAL THANKS TO ALL THE INDIVIDUALS, BUSINESSES, FOUNDATIONS & CORPORATIONS FROM JANUARY 1, 1997 THROUGH JUNE 30, 1997.

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Mothers Day Tribute to Betsy Hudnut

Vivian Leith

Happy Birthday to Vivian Leith

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Inside Voices

- C.I.C. Symposium
- Start Early Meetings
- Advocacy Resources
- Network News & More!

Volume 9, Number 1 WINTER 1997

"Start Early" Campaign Gets Underway

It's seen in babies like Graham Deamer. His parents have encouraged him to explore and have provided him with warm, responsive early care. At six months old, he's already aware of his surroundings. Graham grabs at everything in sight -- fingers, hair, toys or household items. He turns his head when he sees objects or people move and even when he hears a loud noise. His brain has made certain connections that respond to bright colors, distinctive patterns and soothing music. The steps taken to develop his brain began the day Graham entered the world.

Voices for Illinois Children is reaching out to 33,000 first-time parents with limited resources about the importance of nurturing their child's healthy development. "Start Early: Learning Begins at Birth" is a two-year public education campaign focused on promoting new brain research and supporting new parents as they provide the best future possible for their children.

Graham Deamer

New research shows that infants thrive with warm responsive early care. This includes a loving touch, a stable environment, quality child care and constant interaction with others. This interaction -- play, talking or reading to an infant -- turns on brain cells, which make new connections that increase the learning potential of the child. But research also shows that children who are emotionally neglected or abandoned very early in life often have difficulty with such brain-mediated functions as empathy, attachment and emotional expression.

"Recent studies show that early stimulation affects the development of the brain and nurtures emotional attachment between the parent and child," said Jerry Stermer, president of Voices for Illinois Children. "That's why we are letting parents know that they have the most important role in nurturing their child's learning, right from birth."

A $1.5 million grant from the McCormick Tribune Foundation will allow Voices to develop and distribute educational materials to young, first-time mothers. A contemporary video, styled as a parenting magazine -- developed with the assistance of Popely & Company, Inc. and R.J. Dale Advertising & Public Relations -- will highlight the importance of a loving touch and parent interaction. The Ounce of Prevention and

(See START EARLY on page 5)

Community Members, Business Leaders & State Policymakers Meet to Improve the Conditions of Illinois Families

The Campaign for Illinois Communities is a collaboration of a number of Illinois groups working to improve the economic and social conditions of Illinois families. Some 250 Illinois residents from sixteen communities across the state joined together in Peoria on September 5 and 6, 1997 to address some of the most complex issues facing Illinois families. They shared ideas, concerns, and frustrations -- but most of all -- they were there to make a difference.

This year's symposium, *Getting Down to Business: Creating Jobs – Sustaining Families*, focused on developing the role of communities, businesses and government in supporting families who are transitioning from welfare into the workforce. The ingredients to achieving the symposium's goal included a plan to strengthen communication between the private and public sectors, brainstorming sessions building upon community strengths, and suggestions on improving the delivery of human services in Illinois.

The Campaign for Illinois Communities is a collaborative effort between the Illinois Department of Human Services, Voices for Illinois Children, Kraft Foods, the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL), the Casey Project, the United Way of Illinois, the Illinois Community Action Association, Project Success, the Illinois Chamber of Commerce, and the Illinois Learning Partnership.

(See FAMILIES on page 5)

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Working Together, Enhancing Futures

A Column from Voices' President Jerome Stermer

"We should all continue to work together to improve statewide and national policies for children..."

I had a wonderful opportunity some weeks back to speak to the annual gathering of regional PTA members in Palatine, Illinois. The topic was, not surprisingly, how to make sure that "kids count." The banquet hall was filled with parents, teachers, principals, superintendents and volunteers -- all advocates for children and all very interested in what the future holds for us and our children in Illinois.

The Palatine PTA conversations took in both ends of the advocacy spectrum -- community efforts and statewide policy. I have to say that when it comes to community strategies there is a lot of excitement and commitment. People believe that good things are happening for children and families because of community collaborative efforts. For example, in the northwest suburbs a number of school districts are collaborating with park districts and other community programs in developing innovative early childhood programs. At the same time there is a growing frustration about over-arching policy matters such as the failure of policy makers to adopt statewide school finance reform and the still minimal policy commitment to programs aimed at preventing child abuse. Illinois PTA members make a strong case for child advocates to "think globally and act act locally." We should all continue to work together to improve statewide and national policies for children, but remember that everyday we can make a difference for children in our own families, our own school and our own communities.

In her new book, Common Purpose, Lisbeth Schorr makes the point that strengthening families and neighborhoods needs to be at the top of the priority list if we want to make a real difference for children in America today. Many of us remember Schorr's earlier book, Within Our Reach which argued eloquently for greater investments in family support programs and other strategies to reduce teen pregnancy, welfare dependency and the like. In her new book, Ms. Schorr describes a number of examples where community leaders have engaged in cooperative planning to ensure that social change programs are well integrated with community economic development strategies as well as school reform. Drawing from successful innovations around the country, she makes the case that the hard work of collaboration must be combined with a willingness to change or break traditional rules in order to really get things done.

PTA members have a long history of combining hard work with bending the rules in their advocacy for children. In this issue of Voices, we have endeavored to feature the work of a number of child advocates in Illinois who are working on policy and program strategies that are important to children both at the community level and statewide. Like the PTA, we believe that all of us -- parents, community members, business and religious leaders as well as policy makers -- have an important contribution to make to ensure that all our kids count in Illinois.

Jerry Stermer

16

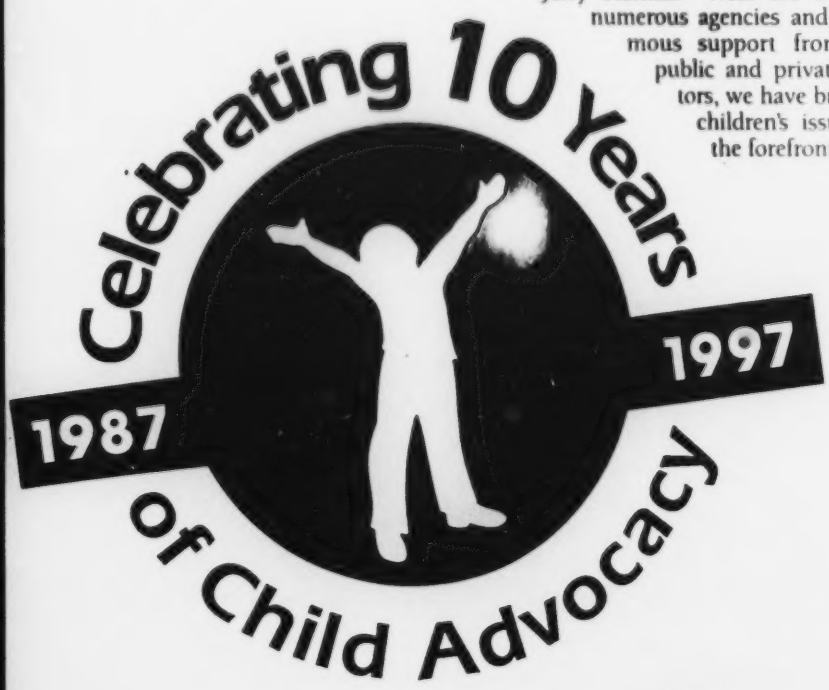
Voices Recognizes Founders

Voices recently closed out the celebration of its 10 year anniversary by recognizing its founding board members. The event -- hosted by the Northern Trust Company in downtown Chicago -- brought together its founding members, along with many of Voices' friends and donors.

The evening began with wine and hors d' oeuvres which led to remarks by Harold A. Richman, director of The Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago. Current Board Chair, Kathy Holloran, then presented each founder with a gift commemorating the event.

Voices began its advocacy work in 1987 determined to help reverse the trends that had made conditions unacceptable for an increasing number of children in the state. Voices was formed by the Plan of Action for Children Task Force. The task force addressed children's problems in a collection of recommendations called the *1987 Plan of Action for Children*, which became the blueprint for Voices activities.

"In the beginning, two of our main goals were to help promote public awareness of the issues that affect our children and to be a strong voice for kids in Illinois by working with other advocacy organizations statewide," said Voices President, Jerry Stermer. "With the help of numerous agencies and enormous support from the public and private sectors, we have brought children's issues to the forefront."



Over the years Voices has testified in Springfield, organized numerous trainings, hosted community forums, offered speakers to other agencies, proposed legislation on various children's issues, conducted county-by-county and statewide research on the conditions of children and informed the general public of children's issues by publishing countless letters-to-the-editor in newspapers all across Illinois. The ability to achieve these tasks is driven by dedication and collaboration.

Voices' first Board of Directors included business, civic and community leaders from around the state. That strategy has continued over the years and has proved beneficial to the goals of Voices. The 10-year-old advocacy group has successfully been able to maintain an active, diverse and stable board.

Many of the initial board members are still with Voices or offer their assistance when needed. The first board included: Jeanette Bitter, Chair; Weston Christopherson, Vice Chair; John C. Colman, Vice Chair; Marjorie Craig Benton; Frank Bixby; Jill Bradley; Anita Broms; Marvin R. Cohen; Roxanne J. Decyk; Kingman Douglas; Sister Julia Huiskamp; Stanley O. Ikenberry; Adrienne Osborne Ives; Robert L. Johnson; Dr. Sokoni Karanja; George Kelm; Elliot Lehman; Richard Mandel; Martin E. Marty; Lourdes Monteagudo; Rev. Dr. Jorge Morales; Dr. Margaret O'Flynn; Margaret Otis; George Ranney, Jr.; The Honorable Joseph Schneider; Jacqueline R. Settles; Mickie Silverstein; Nancy A. Stevenson; Helen R. Weigle; Morton Weir; Bernice Weissbourd and Edward J. Williams.

Advocacy Update: Working on Behalf of Kids

Voices for Illinois Children works in support of a variety of advocacy efforts to improve conditions for Illinois children with a number of groups and individuals. Here are just a few briefs on some of the issues Voices and others are watching.

Early Intervention Program: An unfortunate set-back

Thousands of Illinois children between zero and three may be affected by new changes in the Early Intervention Program. The program provides an array of resources to children with physical, mental and environmental conditions that put them at risk of developmental delays.

Policy changes will result in fewer children being eligible for state subsidized services. Previous program guidelines allowed a broader group of children from ages birth to three to receive therapies and services. New policies now limit services to only those infants and toddlers who have more significant delays.

Child advocates are working to convince policy makers to re-open the eligibility debate so that all children who can benefit from early intervention can have the opportunity -- from the earliest time -- to participate in appropriate programs.

Prevention Initiative: A step forward

Voices and other advocates dedicated their time last spring to securing new funding for programs offered by the Illinois State Board of Education for very young children. As a result, the Prevention Initiative received a $2.3 million increase to $4.3 million and increased the number of programs to 31.

The Prevention Initiative provides grants to public and non-profit agencies that aim to reduce school failure by offering health, social and child development services to at-risk families with infants and toddlers. Services include prenatal care, parental training, child care, nutritional services, health education and career development.

Uninsured Children: New funds available

Beginning October 1, 1997 new federal funds were made available for Illinois' uninsured children. Illinois is now eligible for up to $122.5 million dollars a year for the next ten years to provide services for uninsured children. Voices and other child health advocates have joined together to present the state with recommendations on how to best serve Illinois children who are without health insurance.

Child health advocates are recommending that Illinois act this fall by building on the existing Medicaid program and developing a core group of health professionals, parents and child advocates to brainstorm steps needed to help all eligible children gain access to health care. Several recent reports estimate that there are 310,000 uninsured children in Illinois.

The crucial aspect is that Illinois needs to act now and provide the best plan possible to cover Illinois' uninsured children. Unfortunately, Illinois is currently one of only three states that has yet to extend services to uninsured children. In order for children to grow-up healthy and strong, Illinois must help families access health care for their children.

Voices for Illinois Children: For Your Information

Committee of 100

The 1997-98 Committee of 100, special advocates who serve as local organizers and spokespersons for children and families, met by conference call October 27 to discuss strategies for expanding health insurance for many of the 310,000 uninsured children in Illinois. The statewide teleconference included Jacquie Eddleman, from far southern Dongola, Jackie Haddad from Elmhurst, Charles Gordon from Calumet Park and Carmen Flores-Rance from Chicago, Katie Richards (Chicago) created a flyer which she distributed to businesses in her community, Peggy Patten (Champaign) developed material using Voices and CDF data to mobilize action for children during her church's Children's Sabbath. Gene Simon and Johanna White (Quincy) reported useful feed back from conversations about health care in their community.

Earned Income Credit

Workers earning less than $25,760 who have one child at home and workers earning less than $29,290 and have two or more children at home may be eligible for a tax credit. Eligible workers must apply for the credit by completing a Schedule EIC form when preparing taxes. If you need assistance with filing your taxes call 1-888-827-8511. ***For outreach materials to post at your organization call Voices at (312) 456-0600.***

Start Early 5K Run and Walk

Voices for Illinois Children will hold the Start Early 5K Run & Walk as part of the "Start Early: Learning Begins at Birth" public education campaign. On Sunday, March 29, 1998, participants will enjoy the scenery and camaraderie along Chicago's lakefront as they complete a 5K walk or run on behalf of Illinois children. The Start Early Run will also include a Kid's Dash. Race applications will be available beginning January, 1998. ***For sponsorship opportunities or for more information contact Jim Perry at Voices: (312) 456-0600, ext. 552.***

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START EARLY
(continued from front page)

Family Focus will provide technical assistance to the development of the "Start Early" materials. Two posters depicting the importance of parent bonding will also contribute to the campaign's public education efforts.

"We recognize that people are more willing to receive information and advice from agencies they have a working relationship with," said Stermer. "That's why we are partnering with a number of community centers, government agencies, parent support programs, hospitals and clinics to distribute the videos."

"Start Early" includes a variety of other efforts to promote early learning. Funding supports efforts to develop a high visibility radio and transit campaign promoting healthy growth and development. Voices and Washington, D.C. based Zero to Three: National Center for Infants, Toddlers and Families will sponsor a leadership conference next spring for parents, community leaders and policymakers to support parents and mobilize communities throughout Illinois.

The Voices for Illinois Children "Start Early: Learning Begins at Birth" Campaign poster.

"We know the brain reaches 90 percent of its development by age three. But if negative experiences have occurred during those first three years, its not too late," said Stermer. "The brain can be helped to compensate for problems with appropriately timed, early intervention -- particularly by stimulation from parents and child care providers."

The "Start Early" campaign got off to a good start during the spring of 1997 when the Illinois General Assembly responded to a set of "Start Early" policy recommendations. The Illinois legislators approved an $11.2 million increase in pre-kindergarten funding, added $2 million to the Early Childhood Parental Training program, increased the Prevention Initiative to $4.3 million and appropriated $2 million for voluntary home visiting programs.

"Thanks to the work of many advocates, our voices were heard and we made many gains," said Stermer. "But there's still more to do. That's why -- with the help of others -- we are moving full force with the "Start Early: Learning Begins at Birth" campaign. It's beneficial to everyone to know what their child is capable of learning and how they as parents or child care providers play a crucial role in a child's developmental process."

FAMILIES
(continued from front page)

"We recognize that important suggestions and ideas for improvements in public policies and programs come from the community," said Gaylord Gieseke, senior projects director for Voices for Illinois Children. "This year's symposium brought a wide variety of community stakeholders together with their local state agency representatives and key state policy leaders. The experience of actively working together over two days promotes on-going partnerships and collaborations."

IDHS's new Secretary, Howard Peters, spoke of his commitment to making improvements in the department which serves thousands of Illinois residents. He displayed his sincerity as he led an interactive question and answer session on Saturday morning. The wide variety of community members had Peters' full attention while they addressed their concerns and ideas. Participants called attention to the lack of social skills present in some of the employees dealing directly with TANF recipients and suggested sensitivity training should be considered. This, he said, was food for thought and action.

Using the working conference model, participants were divided into groups to create a more dynamic and interactive environment. Discussions focused on building greater understanding of the challenges families face in moving from welfare to work, what new approaches human services providers need to take to help families, and how to help people find and keep a job. The discussions were always focused upon building on family strengths and identifying community partners, including business and education.

William Pollard, chairman of ServiceMaster, had thought provoking comments regarding leadership roles of a business and those who run businesses. He challenged all of us to approach work and leadership roles with a serving heart. Pollard suggested that his company is on the right track, but the road to change is always challenging.

"Most of our people come to us in entry level positions. Over 50 percent are classified as minorities. Many need additional educational skills, some require help in social skills, and others may at one time in their life have been considered a drop-out; a drop-out of school or society," Pollard said. "So the task before us is to train and motivate people to work and to be more productive in their work. This is both a management and a leadership challenge."

The Campaign for Illinois Communities convened its first statewide symposium in the spring of 1996. Additional campaign activities have included a number of town meetings, round table discussions and a series of planning sessions that have had a positive impact on both the organization of Illinois Human Services programs and state Welfare to Work policies.

"Bringing people together can sometimes be a challenge, but now is an important time for all of us to work together to improve conditions for families and communities," said Gieseke. "When we focus on shared goals and strategies, each of us can find ways to contribute to better outcomes."

Left to Right: Howard Peters, secretary of IDHS; Margo Schreiber, DuPage County Federation; Jerome Stermer, president of Voices; C. William Pollard, chairman of the ServiceMaster Co.; B.J. Walker, IDHS director of Community Operations; Hugh Parry, executive director of United Way of Illinois.

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Business Cares for Kids

An Update

This past September, Voices for Illinois Children launched Business Cares For Kids -- a new corporate partnership program designed to raise awareness about corporate efforts on behalf of Illinois children. The program is also attempting to present a variety of opportunities for businesses to learn from one another about the ways corporate leadership can help solve the problems facing the children in our state.

One opportunity for learning is presented through our Business Cares For Kids Corporate Roundtable -- a quarterly meeting of corporate leaders who are committed to increasing the role corporations play in finding solutions to those problems.

Voices' first Business Cares For Kids Corporate Roundtable meeting was hosted by Jim Mitchell at the Northern Trust on September 18, 1997. Representatives from several of the Chicago area's largest corporations were in attendance to help shape this new program and determine the Roundtable's future activities.

The Field Museum will host the next Corporate Roundtable meeting on Thursday, December 11, 1997. The meeting will include a presentation on the latest statistical data indicating child well-being in Illinois. This data will be included in our *Illinois Kids Count* data book scheduled for release in January 1998.

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT BUSINESS CARES FOR KIDS, CONTACT VOICES DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT, JIM PERRY AT: (312) 456-0600, EXT. 552.

Business Cares for Kids Profile: Allstate

Dear Allstate,

Thank you for the McGruff books. We have each read our books. The books will help us learn how to be safe. We liked seeing our own names in the book. Thanks again for the wonderful books.

Sincerely,
Room 13
Winkelman School

Allstate Insurance Company, with over 45,000 employees, is the nation's second largest insurer of cars and homes. Under the leadership of Chief Executive Officer Jerry D. Choate, they are the nation's largest publicly held personal lines insurer and have more than 20 million customers. A closer look at their company will also reveal that children, and their families, are in good hands at Allstate.

It should be no surprise to discover that personal safety and security is an area where the entire company partners with customers to find ways to reduce the loss of life and property in the community.

✔ Allstate established a variety of partnerships and initiatives to educate children on fire prevention. As an example, agents and employee volunteers partner with local fire departments to conduct fire safety workshops, seminars and special events. In early 1996, Allstate formed and funded the For A Safer America Coalition and launched a nationwide public service campaign, *Be Cool About Fire Safety,* designed to teach kids ages 5 to 8 how to prevent fires and what to do in case of a fire.

✔ The Allstate Foundation has made more than $1 million in grants to the Boys & Girls Clubs Chicago and America, and has committed $600,000 to support the Street Smart program designed to help youths ages 11 to 13 effectively resist gangs and violence in their community.

✔ Allstate also supports numerous initiatives across the country to promote the use of child safety seats.

To demonstrate that they also care for their employees' children, Allstate recently spent $3 million to build the Little Hands Child Development Center, an on-site child care center at its headquarters in Northbrook, IL. Designed (with parent input) to accommodate up to 190 children, the center offers care for preschoolers, full-day kindergarten and vacation or holiday care. Parents also participate in transition seminars to help prepare their children for placement there. It comes as no surprise that Allstate was recently chosen as one of the ten best companies for working mothers by *Working Mother* magazine. Allstate clearly demonstrates that ***Business Cares For Kids.***

Allstate CEO Jerry Choate (left) and Philadelphia Boys & Girls Club member Jovan Pratt (right) meet during the first ever corporate volunteerism summit in Northbrook, IL. The summit aligns Allstate's corporate volunteer commitments with the ongoing efforts of America's Promise -- The Alliance for Youth.

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Your Voice: Leadership that Serves

By C. William Pollard

C. William Pollard is the chairman of ServiceMaster Company in Downers Grove, Illinois. ServiceMaster provides lawncare, janitorial services, institutional foodservices, and home appliance repairs to 5.5 million homes, 1,500 hospitals and 500 educational institutions. At this year's symposium in Peoria, Illinois, Pollard gave an exhilarating speech about the leadership role we should all take in shaping a better future for everyone. Here is an excerpt from his speech:

"We all need to be involved in finding solutions. No one can afford to stand on the sidelines. We must be leaders with a vision, a conviction of purpose and a mission -- and also, I suggest, leaders with a servant's heart.

Will the real leader please stand up? Not the president or the person with the most distinguished title or the longest tenure, but the role model. Not the highest paid person in the group, but the servant. Not the person who promotes himself or herself, but the promoter of others. Not the administrator, but the initiator. Not the taker, but the giver. Not the talker, but the listener.

It was Samuel Beckett and James Joyce who were friends and confidants. Although the writings of Joyce have received more fame and publicity, Beckett won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1969. His essays, short stories, novels, plays, radio and television scripts are generally obscure and esoteric works stressing the absurdity and despair of life. His characters are typically engaged in meaningless habits to occupy their time, but have no purpose or mission and accomplish nothing. As he spoke with unflinching honesty about the emptiness of life without purpose or meaning, he may well have been describing the people who think only of themselves and their own well being and who are not actively involved in helping others.

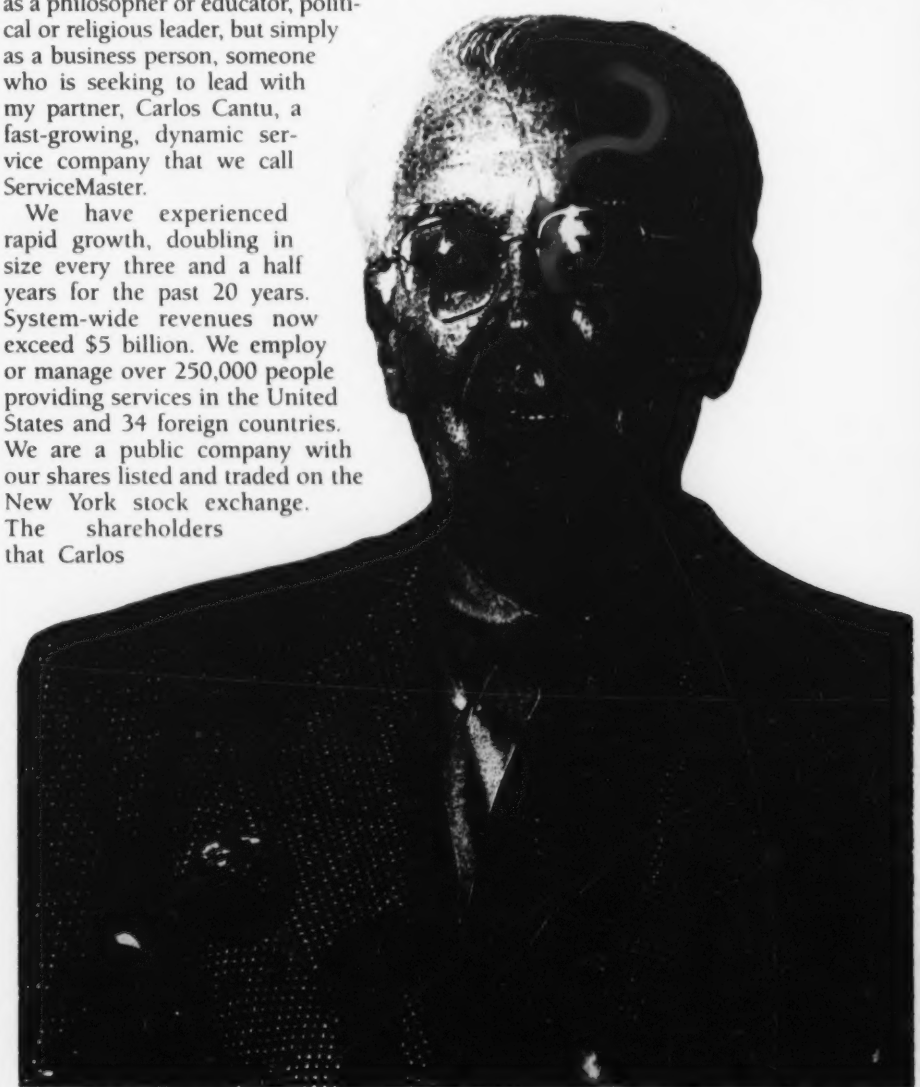
It was Socrates who stated that a person should first understand oneself as a means of making contributions to others. "Know thyself" was his advice. Aristotle counseled his followers, to use one's talents to the utmost, one must have discretion and direction. His advice was "control thyself." Another great thinker suggested service to others, especially those you seek to lead. "Give thyself" were words spoken by Jesus as He washed his disciples' feet. In doing, He taught that no leader is greater than the people he or she leads, and that even the humblest of tasks is worthy for a leader to do.

Does this example fit into today's world two thousand years later? There is certainly no scarcity of feet to wash, and towels are always available. The only limitation, if there is one, is with us. Are we willing to be on our hands and knees, to compromise our pride and status, to be involved and to have compassion for those we lead, those we work with and those we live with?

Now as I ask these fundamental questions about leadership and about the future of our communities, I do so not as a philosopher or educator, political or religious leader, but simply as a business person, someone who is seeking to lead with my partner, Carlos Cantu, a fast-growing, dynamic service company that we call ServiceMaster.

We have experienced rapid growth, doubling in size every three and a half years for the past 20 years. System-wide revenues now exceed $5 billion. We employ or manage over 250,000 people providing services in the United States and 34 foreign countries. We are a public company with our shares listed and traded on the New York stock exchange. The shareholders that Carlos and I are responsible to as leaders vote every day on our leadership -- they have the choice to buy, hold or sell.

But the measure of my success as a leader is not just in the value of our shares or the profit we produce. It more importantly relates to the people with whom I work and the people we serve -- people who are looking for opportunity -- people who are looking for leadership."



Network News: Advocates Working on Behalf of Children

Thousands of people across the state dedicate each day to making sure the needs of Illinois children are addressed. Here are just a few.

CHICAGO

Illinois Representative **Barbara Flynn Currie** has been awarded the 1997 NASW National Public Elected Official Award. Her accomplishments include sponsorship of the Illinois Freedom of Information Act, the state program that funds preschool services for children at risk of academic failure and recent leadership efforts to establish a health insurance plan for uninsured children.

Voices board member, **Sokoni Karanja,** has been selected to receive the 1997 Outstanding Community Leader Award from the National Society of Fund Raising Executives-Chicago Chapter. Karanja is the founder and president of Centers for New Horizons, Inc. which provides child care, foster care, and senior citizens services as well as an array of health and human services.

Youth Guidance recently received a new grant funded by the Illinois Department of Human Services to continue its Youth Employment and Training Initiative (YETI) program. YETI, in its fifth year, provides high school students of TANF families with career awareness, job readiness training, employment and counseling programs. **Jaime D. Rivera** is the assistant director at Youth Guidance and the director of the Youth Employment and Training Initiative.

The Ariel Community Academy is making headway in the Chicago Public School system. The new small school -- located in the North Kenwood/Oakland neighborhood -- opened its doors in 1996 with two pre-kindergarten and two kindergarten classes. **Kimberly Bailey,** a classroom teacher at Ariel, says what makes this school unique is the commitment to work with families, community members and businesses, not only to prepare children for the future, but to give them the confidence and vision to change the future and the community. Ariel will add one grade each year to make the transition to a pre-kindergarten through eighth grade school by the year 2008.

COAL VALLEY/MOLINE

Gary Brown, superintendent of Arrowhead Ranch, is excited about the strides the agency has recently made.

Arrowhead is a residential facility for troubled boys ages 13 through 17 that provides educational and social services to help residents become productive members of society. The Positive Peer Culture -- one of the structured programs available -- requires 12 boys to stay together 24-hours a day to help each other solve their individual problems.

EAST ST. LOUIS

Dedicated to children, the Griffin Center opened its doors hours earlier than scheduled to provide alternative programs to more than 600 students affected by a recent school strike. During the four-and-a-half week strike, students attended tutoring sessions and participated in several educational field trips. **Sister Julia Huiskamp,** director of the Griffin Center programs, heads the five centers located in public housing developments. Griffin Center programs offer social recreation, anti-drug programs, after-school and mentoring programs for children between 5 and 13.

MOLINE

Bethany for Children and Families is continually expanding its services to support children and families. **Mary Ann McLeod,** director of Prevention and Education Services, recently received funding for two new programs. *Boys to Men* is a program geared towards helping African-American males who are at-risk of dropping out of school and/or becoming involved with gangs. The second new program, *Recipe for Parenting,* is a program for teen parents that teaches nutritional value and cooking skills. Bethany for Children and Families provides adoption, counseling, foster care and special needs services. Bethany also offers prevention education services and child abuse/neglect services.

PEORIA

LaVerne Young, founder and director of Operation Change and Empowerment (OCE), led efforts for city-wide recognition on the importance of family bonding. OCE works in collaboration with churches, educational institutions, health and welfare agencies to help build character in youth. Through Young's dedication and hard work, the city of Peoria issued a special proclamation recognizing August as Family Month. During August, OCE held a parade and several nightly break-out sessions on strengthening family, community concerns and possible solutions for problems facing youth and families.

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QUINCY

Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of Adams County is helping Carthage, Illinois develop a CASA group that will serve Hancock County. **Teri Dahl,** director of CASA of Adams County, has conducted several training sessions for the first volunteer group in Hancock County. Dahl is very pleased to help provide a service to more children in a part of the state that she says has been clearly underserved.

ROCK ISLAND

The Rainbow-Skip-A-Long II Child Development Center recently launched a $250,000 Capital Campaign. **Laurel Walker,** executive director of the Skip-A-Long/Rainbow Child Development Centers, says they are excited about the goals set for the campaign. Plans include acquiring additional space for new programs, renovating the existing facility and purchasing the current site from the Housing Authority. Skip-A-Long/Rainbow Child Development Centers provide subsidized child care for low and moderate income families and full fee services for those who work themselves off fee subsidy.

VOICES FOR ILLINOIS CHILDREN

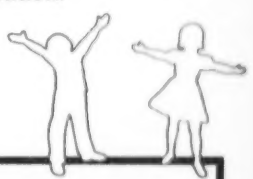
The French American Foundation recently produced *"A Welcome for Every Child"* -- an hour-long documentary narrated by Meryl Streep -- which looked at the critical issues surrounding early childhood development. Voices President **Jerry Stermer** was featured in the documentary which focused on health care, child care and early educational support. The film aired on WTTW in Chicago.

Child Advocates in nine cities throughout Illinois have been involved in a new series of "Start Early" policy meetings. Working in collaboration with a number of state and local partners, **Dan Sprehe** and other Voices staff have facilitated community discussions about the effects of public policy on early childhood development and strategies for individuals and community groups to impact public policy. Participating cities include: Bloomington, Carlinville, Centralia, Des Plaines, Elgin, Elmhurst, Hinsdale, Palos Hills and Peoria. ***For more information contact Dan Sprehe at (312) 456-0600.***

Voices recently joined the **Illinois Learning Partnership.** Under this collaborative effort, the partners will focus on removing barriers to improve public education for students and teachers. The Partnership Council will also serve as a catalyst for change by fostering local, regional and statewide educational innovations. The Illinois Statewide School Management Alliance, the Illinois Education Association, the Illinois Federation of Teachers, the Illinois State Board of Education, the Illinois Parent Teacher Association, Motorola, the Illinois Farm Bureau, the Chicago Urban League and the Latino Institute are all part of this new effort chaired by **Wayne Sampson** of the Illinois Association of School Boards.

Congratulations to **Julia Beckman,** Voices' director of administration, on her re-election to the Community High School 99 district board. The overwhelming vote allows Julia to continue her involvement in policy decisions for the school district which serves 5,200 students in the Downers Grove Woodridge, Darien area. Beckman was sworn in on November 10, 1997.

Voices for Illinois Children was pleased to be recognized by the **Illinois Association of Non-Profit Organizations** with a first place distinguished award for *"Want to Change a Child's Life"* newspaper ad and the third place merit award for the *"Voices"* newsletter in IANO's annual non-profit publication competition.



IF YOU KNOW A PERSON OR A GROUP THAT YOU THINK SHOULD BE RECOGNIZED FOR GREAT ADVOCACY EFFORTS, CALL MARJORIE NEWMAN AT (312) 456-0600, EXT. 564;

VOICES FOR ILLINOIS CHILDREN
NETWORK NEWS
208 S. LASALLE ST., SUITE 1580
CHICAGO, IL 60604,
E-Mail: info@voices4kids.org

Advocacy Resources: Know Your Facts

Voices produces materials that can help us all become better advocates for young people. Here's a list of our available resources.

Special Report:
New Federal Funds Available to Cover Uninsured Children-Options for Illinois
This report clearly describes the new federal program for uninsured children and offers options for the state on how to best serve Illinois' uninsured children.
• *Complimentary*

Falling Through the Gap:
Uninsured Children in Illinois
This statistical snapshot reveals that Illinois has 310,000 uninsured children. The report breaks common stereotypes of the characteristics of these kids, profiles families trying to cope with having no insurance, and offers solutions to this increasing problem of uninsured children.
• *Complimentary*

Ten Things Every Child Needs
An 11-minute video summary of the one-hour show explaining the needs of infants and young children. This fascinating video, produced by WTTW/ Channel 11 and supported by the Robert R. McCormick Tribune Foundation, shows 10 easy things parents can do to dramatically aid in the development of their baby.
• *Limited quantities are still available*

Special Report: Welfare Reform
This easy-to-read eight-page report reviews the impact of welfare reform on children.
• *Complimentary*

Special Report:
Education Finance Reform
This paper critiques the problems plaguing Illinois' education funding systems and lists the components of a successful school finance plan.
• *Complimentary*

Learning to Fly
This 12-minute video highlights the importance of quality early childhood education and care.
• *$10 for members*
• *$12 for non-members*

A Child Advocate's Guide to Fear-Free Fact Finding
This technical assistance guide offers step-by-step instructions to locate data on children and families as well as equations to calculate basic statistics. This informative guide also includes a detailed list of national and Illinois specific education, economic, child welfare and health data sources.
• *Complimentary*

"Start Early:
Learning Begins at Birth" poster
These posters deliver the message that learning takes place in the emotional interaction between parent and baby. The posters are offered in two different images: one White and one African-American.
• *Complimentary*

Dollars and Sense:
A Guide to Spending on Children and Families in Illinois
An in-depth look into state finances, this primer reveals how Illinois spends more money reacting to rather than preventing problems.
• *Free for members*
• *$5 for non-members*

Illinois Kids Count:
Rising to the Challenge (1996-1997)
This report provides child well-being statistics by county and outlines ideas working to improve the lives of children.
• *now only $5*
• *A complimentary summary is available*

TO ORDER ANY PUBLICATION, CALL VOICES AT: (312) 456-0600

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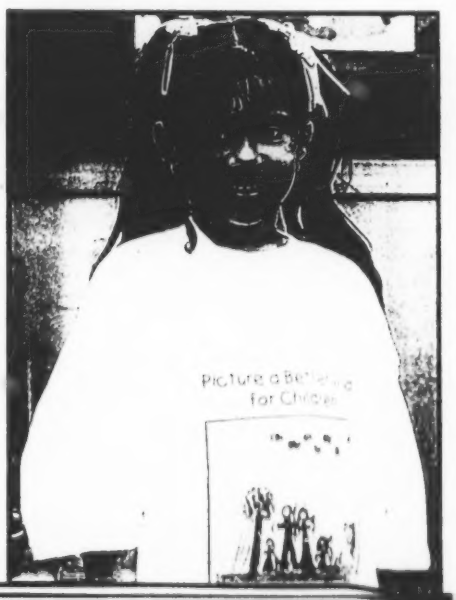
Voices Spreads the Word at Summer Street Fests

It started with a simple idea to expand our public education and mobilization efforts and a colorful drawing by Estella Ruiz, a student at the Dorothy de Lacey Family Center in Carpentersville, IL. With the help of our corporate partners at Panasonic, the idea and drawing came together on a T-shirt with the theme: "Picture a Better World for Children."

The t-shirts, and Voices' advocacy message, were taken to a number of summer street fairs. Hundreds of children had their faces painted while their parents heard about the need to "start early" in every child's life. State Representative Pat Linder and Galen Harry from Panasonic joined Voices' President Jerry Stermer in presenting Estella with one of the t-shirts bearing her artwork and her name.

From left to right: Jerry Stermer, president of Voices; Galen Harry, Panasonic; State Representative Pat Lindner; Dr. Charles Brown, principal for the Dorothy de Lacey Center; Maria Ruiz, Estella's mother; and Estella Ruiz.



Picture a Better World

Our new Voices' T-shirts would make great holiday gifts. The T-shirts bear the artwork of first grader Estella Ruiz. They are available in medium, large, extra large and extra-extra large. T-shirts cost $12 ($10 for members). Quantities are limited so call Voices at (312) 456-0600 to order.

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In Memory of Thomas K. Heeres

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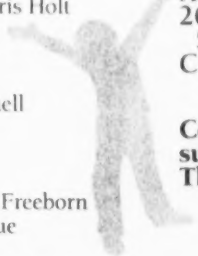
Note:
Our sincere apologies to GFWC Illinois Federation of Women's Clubs for failing to recognize their gift in the previous issue of Voices newsletter.

If you are not listed and believe you should be or are listed incorrectly, please accept our apologies and send a note of correction to:

VOICES FOR ILLINOIS CHILDREN
ATTN: DEVELOPMENT DEPT
208 S. LASALLE ST.
SUITE 1580
CHICAGO, IL 60604-1103

Corrections will appear in subsequent publications. Thank you.



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